

# METHOD OF DEPOSITING AN OPTICAL QUALITY SILICA FILM BY PECVD

## Background of the Invention

### 1. Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to the manufacture of high quality optical films, and in particular to a method of depositing an optical quality silica film by PECVD. The invention can be applied to the manufacture of photonic devices, for example, Mux/Demux devices for use fiber optic communications.

### 2. Description of Related Art

[0002] The manufacture of integrated optical devices, such as optical Multiplexers (Mux) and Demultiplexers (Dmux) requires the fabrication of optical quality elements, such as waveguides and gratings highly transparent in the 1.30 $\mu$ m and 1.55  $\mu$ m optical bands. These silica-based optical elements are basically composed of three layers: buffer, core and cladding. For reasons of simplicity, the buffer and cladding layers are typically of the same composition and refractive index. In order to confine the 1.55  $\mu$ m (and/or 1.30  $\mu$ m) wavelength laser beam, the core must have a higher refractive index than the buffer and cladding layers. The required refractive index difference is referred to as the 'delta-n' and is one of the most important characteristics of these silica-based optical elements.

[0003] It is very difficult to fabricate transparent silica-based optical elements in the 1.55  $\mu$ m wavelength (and/or 1.30 wavelength) optical region while maintaining a suitable difference delta-n and preventing stress-induced mechanical and problems. Our co-pending US patent application serial No. 09/799,491 filed on March 7, 2000 entitled 'Method of Making a Functional Device with Deposited Layers subject to High Temperature Anneal' describes an improved Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapour Deposition technique for these silica-based elements which allows the attainment of the required 'delta-n' while eliminating the undesirable residual Si:N-H oscillators (observed as a FTIR peak centered at 3380  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515  $\mu$ m), SiN-H oscillators (centered at 3420  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.479  $\mu$ m) and SiO-H oscillators (centered at 3510  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical

absorption between 1.408 and 1.441  $\mu\text{m}$ ) after a high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient, typically at 800°C.

[0004] With such a high temperature thermal treatment are associated some residual stress-induced mechanical problems of deep-etched optical elements (mechanical movement of the side-walls) and some residual stress-induced mechanical problems at the buffer/core interface or at the core/cladding interface (micro-structural defects, micro-voiding and separation).

[0005] Recently published literature reveals various PECVD approaches to obtain these high performance optically transparent silica-based optical elements: Valette S., New integrated optical multiplexer-demultiplexer realized on silicon substrate, ECIO '87, 145, 1987; Grand G., Low-loss PECVD silica channel waveguides for optical communications, Electron. Lett., 26 (25), 2135, 1990 ; Bruno F., Plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition of low-loss SiON optical waveguides at 1.5- $\mu\text{m}$  wavelength, Applied Optics, 30 (31), 4560, 1991; Kapser K., Rapid deposition of high-quality silicon-oxinitride waveguides, IEEE Trans. Photonics Tech. Lett., 5 (12), 1991; Lai Q., Simple technologies for fabrication of low-loss silica waveguides, Elec. Lett., 28 (11), 1000, 1992; Lai Q., Formation of optical slab waveguides using thermal oxidation of SiO<sub>x</sub>, Elec. Lett., 29 (8), 714, 1993; Liu K., Hybrid optoelectronic digitally tunable receiver, SPIE, Vol 2402, 104, 1995; Tu Y., Single-mode SiON/SiO<sub>2</sub>/Si optical waveguides prepared by plasma-enhanced Chemical vapor deposition, Fiber and integrated optics, 14, 133, 1995; Hoffmann M., Low temperature, nitrogen doped waveguides on silicon with small core dimensions fabricated by PECVD/RIE, ECIO'95, 299, 1995; Bazylenko M., Pure and fluorine-doped silica films deposited in a hollow cathode reactor for integrated optic applications, J. Vac. Sci. Technol. A 14 (2), 336, 1996; Poenar D., Optical properties of thin film silicon-compatible materials, Appl. Opt. 36 (21), 5112, 1997; Hoffmann M., Low-loss fiber-matched low-temperature PECVD waveguides with small-core dimensions for optical communication systems, IEEE Photonics Tech. Lett., 9 (9), 1238, 1997; Pereyra I., High quality low temperature DPECVD silicon dioxide, J. Non-Crystalline Solids, 212, 225, 1997; Kenyon T., A luminescence study of silicon-rich silica and rare-earth doped silicon-rich silica, Fourth Int. Symp. Quantum Confinement Electrochemical Society, 97-11, 304, 1997; Alayo M., Thick SiO<sub>x</sub>N<sub>y</sub> and SiO<sub>2</sub> films

obtained by PECVD technique at low temperatures, Thin Solid Films, 332, 40, 1998; Bulla D., Deposition of thick TEOS PECVD silicon oxide layers for integrated optical waveguide applications, Thin Solid Films, 334, 60, 1998; Valette S., State of the art of integrated optics technology at LETI for achieving passive optical components, J. of Modern Optics, 35 (6), 993, 1988; Ojha S., Simple method of fabricating polarization-insensitive and very low crosstalk AWG grating devices, Electron. Lett., 34 (1), 78, 1998; Johnson C., Thermal annealing of waveguides formed by ion implantation of silica-on-Si, Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research, B141, 670, 1998; Ridder R., Silicon oxynitride planar waveguiding structures for application in optical communication, IEEE J. of Sel. Top. In Quantum Electron., 4 (6), 930, 1998; Germann R., Silicon-oxynitride layers for optical waveguide applications, 195<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Electrochemical Society, 99-1, May 1999, Abstract 137, 1999; Worhoff K., Plasma enhanced cyhemical vapor deposition silicon oxynitride optimized for application in integrated optics, Sensors and Actuators, 74, 9, 1999; and Offrein B., Wavelength tunable optical add-after-drop filter with flat passband for WDM networks, IEEE Photonics Tech. Lett., 11 (2), 239, 1999

**[0006]** A comparison of these various PECVD techniques is summarised in Figure 1 which shows the approaches and methods used to modify the 'delta-n' between buffer (clad) and core with post-deposition thermal treatment.

**[0007]** The various techniques can be grouped into main categories: PECVD using unknown chemicals, unknown chemical reactions and unknown boron (B) and/or phosphorus (P) chemicals and unknown chemical reactions to adjust the 'delta-n' (When specified, the post-deposition thermal treatments range from 400 to 1000°C); PECVD using TEOS and unknown means of adjusting the 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments are not specified); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with O<sub>2</sub> coupled with silicon ion implantation or adjustment of silicon oxide stoichiometry as means of adjusting the 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments range from 400 to 1000°C); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with O<sub>2</sub> coupled with the incorporation of CF<sub>4</sub> (SiH<sub>4</sub>/O<sub>2</sub>/CF<sub>4</sub> flow ratio) as means of adjusting the 'delta-n' (When specified, the post-deposition thermal treatments range from 100 to 1000°C); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with N<sub>2</sub>O coupled with variations of N<sub>2</sub>O concentration (SiH<sub>4</sub>/N<sub>2</sub>O flow ratio) as

means of adjusting the silicon oxide stoichiometry and the 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments range from 400 to 1100°C); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with N<sub>2</sub>O coupled with variations of N<sub>2</sub>O concentration and with the incorporation of Ar (SiH<sub>4</sub>/N<sub>2</sub>O/Ar flow ratio) as means of adjusting the silicon oxide stoichiometry and the 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments is 1000°C); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with N<sub>2</sub>O coupled with the incorporation of NH<sub>3</sub> (SiH<sub>4</sub>/N<sub>2</sub>O/NH<sub>3</sub> flow ratio) to form silicon oxynitrides with various 'delta-n' (When specified, the post-deposition thermal treatments range from 700 to 1100°C); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with N<sub>2</sub>O coupled with the incorporation of NH<sub>3</sub> and Ar (SiH<sub>4</sub>/N<sub>2</sub>O/NH<sub>3</sub>/Ar flow ratio) as to form silicon oxynitrides with various 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments are not specified); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with N<sub>2</sub>O coupled with the incorporation of NH<sub>3</sub> and N<sub>2</sub> chemicals variation (SiH<sub>4</sub>/N<sub>2</sub>O/NH<sub>3</sub>/N<sub>2</sub> flow ratio) as to form silicon oxynitrides with various 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments range from 850 to 1150°C); PECVD using oxidation of SiH<sub>4</sub> with N<sub>2</sub>O and O<sub>2</sub> coupled with the incorporation of CF<sub>4</sub>, N<sub>2</sub> and He (SiH<sub>4</sub>/(N<sub>2</sub>O/N<sub>2</sub>)/O<sub>2</sub>/CF<sub>4</sub> flow ratio) as to form complex mixtures of carbon and fluorine containing silicon oxide as means of adjusting the 'delta-n' (The post-deposition thermal treatments is 425°C).

**[0008]** Our co-pending US patent application serial No. 09/833,711 entitled 'Optical Quality Silica Films' describes an improved Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapour Deposition technique for silica films which shows that the independent control of the SiH<sub>4</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O and N<sub>2</sub> gases as well as of the total deposition pressure via an automatic control of the pumping speed of the vacuum pump in a five-dimensional space consisting of a first independent variable, the SiH<sub>4</sub> flow; a second independent variable, the N<sub>2</sub>O flow; a third independent variable, the N<sub>2</sub> flow; a fourth independent variable; the total deposition pressure (controlled by an automatic adjustment of the pumping speed); and the observed film characteristics; permits the elimination of the undesirable residual Si:N-H oscillators (observed as a FTIR peak centered at 3380 cm<sup>-1</sup> whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515 μm), SiN-H oscillators (centered at 3420 cm<sup>-1</sup> whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.479 μm) and SiO-H oscillators (centered at 3510 cm<sup>-1</sup> and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.408 and 1.441 μm) after thermal treatment at a low

post-deposition temperature of 800°C to provide improved silica films with reduced optical absorption in the 1.55  $\mu\text{m}$  wavelength (and/or 1.30  $\mu\text{m}$  wavelength) optical region.

[0009] Another co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/867,662 entitled 'Method of Depositing Optical Films' describes a new improved Plasma Enhanced Chemical

5 Vapour Deposition technique of silica waveguides which shows that the independent control of the  $\text{SiH}_4$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$  and  $\text{PH}_3$  gases as well as of the total deposition pressure via an automatic control of the pumping speed of the vacuum pump in a six-dimensional space, namely a first independent variable, the  $\text{SiH}_4$  flow; a second independent variable, the  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  flow; a third independent variable, the  $\text{N}_2$  flow; a fourth independent variable, the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow; a fifth independent variable; the total deposition pressure (controlled by an automatic adjustment of the pumping speed); and the observed waveguides characteristics, is key to achieving the required 'delta-n' while still eliminating the undesirable residual Si:N-H oscillators (observed as a FTIR peak centered at  $3380\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515  $\mu\text{m}$ ),  
15 SiN-H oscillators (centered at  $3420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.479  $\mu\text{m}$ ) and SiO-H oscillators (centered at  $3510\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.408 and 1.441  $\mu\text{m}$ ) after thermal treatment at a low post-deposition temperature of 800°C as to provide improved silica waveguides with reduced optical absorption in the 1.55  $\mu\text{m}$  wavelength  
20 (and/or 1.30 wavelength) optical region.

[0010] While these techniques are capable of producing optical quality films, they can result in stress-induced mechanical problems for deep-etched optical components.

#### Summary of the Invention

[0011] According to the present invention there is provided a method of depositing an  
25 optical quality silica film by PECVD (Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition), comprising independently setting a predetermined flow rate for a raw material gas; independently setting a predetermined flow rate for an oxidation gas; independently setting a predetermined flow rate for a carrier gas; independently setting a predetermined total deposition pressure; and applying a post deposition heat treatment to the deposited

film at a temperature selected to optimize the mechanical properties without affecting the optical properties of the deposited film.

[0012] In a preferred embodiment flow rate for a dopant gas is also independently set. The observed FTIR characteristics of the deposited film are monitored to determine the optimum post deposition heat treatment temperature.

[0013] This technique permits the required 'delta-n' to be achieved while eliminating the undesirable residual Si:N-H oscillators (observed as a FTIR peak centered at  $3380\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.515\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ), SiN-H oscillators (centered at  $3420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.479\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) and SiO-H oscillators (centered at  $3510\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.408$  and  $1.441\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) after an optimised thermal treatment in a nitrogen. The technique can provide improved silica-based optical elements with reduced optical absorption in the  $1.55\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  wavelength (and/or  $1.30\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  wavelength) optical region without the residual stress-induced mechanical problems of deep-etched optical elements (mechanical movement of side-walls), without the residual stress-induced mechanical problems at the buffer/core or core/cladding interfaces (micro-structural defects, micro-voiding and separation) and without the residual stress-induced optical problems (polarisation dependant power loss).

#### **Brief Description of the Drawings**

[0014] The invention will now be described in more detail, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

[0015] Figure 1 is a comparison table showing various PECVD approaches for controlling the refractive index and reducing the optical absorption of silica films;

[0016] Figure 2 shows the FTIR fundamental infrared absorption peaks and their corresponding higher harmonics peaks associated with the residual compounds resulting from high temperature thermal treatments of PECVD silica-based optical components in a nitrogen ambient;

[0017] Figure 3a shows the basic FTIR spectra of various buffers (claddings) obtained with a typical PECVD process after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

5 [0018] Figure 3b shows the basic FTIR spectra of various buffers (claddings) obtained with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending patent application serial no. 09/833,711 and after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

[0019] Figure 3c shows the basic FTIR spectra of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending patent application serial no. 09/799,4091 and after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

10 [0020] Figure 3d shows the basic FTIR spectra of various cores obtained with the PECVD deposition technique in accordance with the principles of the invention and after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

[0021] Figure 4a shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 810 to 1000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (clads) obtained with a typical PECVD process after a 180 minutes thermal  
15 treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

[0022] Figure 4b shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 810 to 1000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (clads) obtained with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending patent application titled 09/833,711 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

20 [0023] Figure 4c shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 810 to 1000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

[0024] Figure 4d shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 810 to 1000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores  
25 obtained with the new PECVD deposition technique after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

[0025] Figure 5c shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1260 to 1500  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-

pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

5 [0026] Figure 5d shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1260 to 1500  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained with the new PECVD deposition technique after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

[0027] Figure 6a shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1500 to 1600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with a typical PECVD process after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

10 [0028] Figure 6b shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1500 to 1600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

15 [0029] Figure 6c shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1500 to 1600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

[0030] Figure 6d shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1500 to 1600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained with the new PECVD deposition technique after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

20 [0031] Figure 7a shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1700 to 2200  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with a typical PECVD process after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

25 [0032] Figure 7b shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1700 to 2200  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

[0033] Figure 7c shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1700 to 2200  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-



pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

5   **[0034]** Figure 7d shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 1700 to 2200  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained with the new PECVD deposition technique after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

**[0035]** Figure 8a shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 2200 to 2400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (cladding) obtained with a typical PECVD process after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

10   **[0036]** Figure 8b shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 2200 to 2400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

15   **[0037]** Figure 8c shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 2200 to 2400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

**[0038]** Figure 8d shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 2200 to 2400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained with the new PECVD deposition technique after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

20   **[0039]** Figure 9a shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 3200 to 3900  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with a typical PECVD process after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

25   **[0040]** Figure 9b shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 3200 to 3900  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various buffers (claddings) obtained with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

**[0041]** Figure 9c shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 3200 to 3900  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  of various cores obtained at 2.60 Torr with the PECVD deposition technique described in our co-

pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;

5 [0042] Figure 9d shows the in-depth FTIR spectra from 3200 to 3900 cm<sup>-1</sup> of various cores obtained with the new PECVD deposition technique after a 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures;

[0043] Figure 10 shows the stress hysteresis of buffer (cladding) and core in a nitrogen ambient using a 180 minutes stabilization at 800°C;

[0044] Figure 11 is SEM pictures of a grating and of a waveguide with quasi-vertical side-walls deep-etched through buffer and core;

10 [0045] Figure 12 shows the gradually sloped side-wall formation from the elastic strain of deep-etched buffer/core optical elements resulting from the (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) combination;

15 [0046] Figure 13 shows side-wall angle measurements of neighboring 5.0 μm wide deep-etched waveguide and a 1150μm wide deep-etched grating; Figures 13a and 13b show the relative position between an isolated 5.0μm wide deep-etched waveguide and its neighboring 1150μm wide deep-etched grating at two different magnifications; Figure 13c shows the sidewall of the 5.0μm wide deep-etched waveguide facing the neighboring grating has a slope of about 90°; Figure 13d shows the side-wall of the 1150μm wide deep-etched grating facing the neighboring deep-etched waveguide has a much smaller  
20 slope of about 84° ;

[0047] Figure 14 shows how the interfacial stress relief of the shear stress building at the buffer/core or core/cladding interfaces results in a noticeable modification of the micro-structure of these interfaces;

25 [0048] Figure 15 shows how the interfacial stress relief of the shear stress building at the buffer/core or core/cladding interfaces results in an important modification of the micro-structure and in the formation of micro-voids in the core and near these interfaces;

[0049] Figure 16 shows the stress relief contraction of the tensile stress core during SEM preparation;

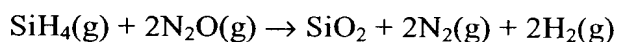
[0050] Figure 17 shows the effect of the incidence angle of infrared light at the air/core interface on the reflection and transmission of infrared optical power (case where the infrared light is incoming from the air side of the side-wall of core a waveguide, a grating or of an another optical element); and

- 5 [0051] Figure 18 shows the effect of the incidence angle of infrared light at the air/core interface on the reflection and transmission of infrared optical power (case where the infrared light is incoming from the core side of the side-wall of core a waveguide, a grating or of an another optical element).

#### Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

- 10 [0052] The invention can be implemented to create PECVD optical quality silica-based optical elements using a commercially available PECVD system, the "Concept One" system manufactured by Novellus Systems in California, USA, and a standard diffusion tube.

- 15 [0053] Figure 2 lists some FTIR fundamental infrared absorption peaks and their corresponding higher harmonics peaks associated with the various residual compounds resulting the Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapour Deposition (PECVD) of buffer (cladding) from a silane (SiH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) gas mixture at a relatively low temperature of 400°C using the following reaction:



- 20 [0054] and following high temperature thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient. It will be seen that the FTIR fundamental infrared absorption peaks and their corresponding higher harmonics peaks associated of the residual compounds resulting from high temperature thermal treatments of PECVD silica films in a nitrogen ambient will contribute to the optical absorption in the 1.30 to 1.55 μm optical bands. The second
- 25 vibration harmonics of the HO-H oscillators in trapped water vapour in the micro-pores of the silica films (3550 to 3750 cm<sup>-1</sup>) increase the optical absorption near 1.333 to 1.408 μm. The second vibration harmonics of the SiO-H oscillators in the silica films (3470 to 3550 cm<sup>-1</sup>) increases the optical absorption near 1.408 to 1.441 μm. The second vibration harmonics of the Si:N-H oscillators in the silica films (3300 to 3460 cm<sup>-1</sup>) increases the
- 30 optical absorption near 1.445 to 1.515 μm. The second vibration harmonics of the SiN-H

oscillators in the silica films ( $3380$  to  $3460\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) increases the optical absorption near  $1.445$  to  $1.479\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ . The third vibration harmonics of the Si-H oscillators in the silica films ( $2210$  to  $2310\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) increases the optical absorption near  $1.443$  to  $1.505\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ . The fourth vibration harmonics of the Si=O oscillators in the silica films ( $1800$  to  $1950\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) increases the optical absorption near  $1.282$  to  $1.389\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ . The fifth vibration harmonics of the N=N oscillators in the silica films ( $1530$  to  $1580\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) increases the optical absorption near  $1.266$  to  $1.307\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ .

[0055] The negative effects of these the oscillators on the optical properties of silica-based optical components are reported in the literature. See, for example, Grand G., Low-loss PECVD silica channel waveguides for optical communications, *Electron. Lett.*, 26 (25), 2135, 1990; Bruno F., Plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition of low-loss SiON optical waveguides at  $1.5\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  wavelength, *Applied Optics*, 30 (31), 4560, 1991; Imoto K., High refractive index difference and low loss optical waveguide fabricated by low temperature processes, *Electronic Letters*, 29 (12), 1993; Hoffmann M., Low temperature, nitrogen doped waveguides on silicon with small core dimensions fabricated by PECVD/RIE, *ECIO'95*, 299, 1995; Bazylenko M., Pure and fluorine-doped silica films deposited in a hollow cathode reactor for integrated optic applications, *J. Vac. Sci. Technol. A* 14 (2), 336, 1996; Pereyra I., High quality low temperature DPECVD silicon dioxide, *J. Non-Crystalline Solids*, 212, 225, 1997; Kenyon T., A luminescence study of silicon-rich silica and rare-earth doped silicon-rich silica, *Electrochem. Soc. Proc. Vol. 97-11*, 304, 1997; Alayo M., Thick SiOxNy and SiO<sub>2</sub> films obtained by PECVD technique at low temperatures, *Thin Solid Films*, 332, 40, 1998. Germann R., Silicon-oxynitride layers for optical waveguide applications, 195<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Electrochemical Society, 99-1, May 1999, Abstract 137, 1999; Worhoff K., Plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition silicon oxynitride optimized for application in integrated optics, *Sensors and Actuators*, 74, 9, 1999.

[0056] This literature describes the tentative elimination of optical absorption (i.e. of the six residual oscillators) using thermal decomposition reactions during thermal treatments under a nitrogen ambient at a maximum temperature lower than  $1350^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the fusion point of the silicon wafer.

**[0057] Comparative Examples**

**[0058]** Optical absorption of typical PECVD buffer (cladding) following a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at various high temperatures

**[0059]** Figure 3a, Figure 4a, Figure 6a, Figure 7a, Figure 8a and Figure 9a show the FTIR spectra of typically deposited PECVD silica films before and after a 180 minutes long high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of either 600, 700, 800, 900, 1000 or 1100°C. It can be seen that the higher the thermal decomposition temperature of the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient, the better the basic FTIR spectra of the treated silica films.

**[0060]** Figure 3a shows the expected gradually more intense and smaller FWHM Si-O-Si "rocking mode" absorption peak (centred at  $460\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and Si-O-Si "in-phase-stretching mode" absorption peak (centred at  $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) as the temperature of the 180 minutes long thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient is increased from 600°C to 1100°C.

**[0061]** Figure 4a shows that the elimination of the Si-OH oscillators (centered at  $885\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is easy and already complete after the 180 minutes long thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 600°C. Figure 4a also shows that the elimination of the Si-ON oscillators (centred at  $950\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is much more difficult and that the higher the temperature of the 180 minutes long thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient, the more nitrogen incorporation as Si-ON oscillators (i.e. as SiONH and/or SiON<sub>2</sub> compounds).

**[0062]** Figure 6a shows that the elimination of the N=N oscillators (centered at  $1555\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is also very difficult and does require the temperature of the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient to reach 1000°C.

**[0063]** Figure 7a shows that there is very little influence of the temperature of the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient on the Si=O oscillators (centered at  $1875\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and on the unknown oscillator (centered at  $2010\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ).

**[0064]** Figure 8a shows that the elimination of the Si-H oscillators (centered at  $2260\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and whose 3<sup>rd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.443 and 1.508  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is easy and already complete after the 180 minutes long thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 600°C.

[0065] Figure 9a shows that the elimination of the Si:N-H oscillators (centered at 3380  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is also very difficult and does require the temperature of the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient to reach 1100°C. The complete elimination of the Si:N-H oscillators is extremely difficult because the nitrogen atoms of these oscillators are bonded to the silicon atoms of the  $\text{SiO}_2$  network via two covalent bonds. Figure 9a also shows that the elimination of the SiN-H oscillators (centered at 3420  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.479  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is almost as difficult and does require the temperature of the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient to reach 1000°C. Figure 9a also shows that the elimination of the SiO-H oscillators (centered at 3510  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.408 and 1.441  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is slightly easier and does require the temperature of the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient to reach 900°C. Finally, Figure 9a also shows that the elimination of the HO-H oscillators (centered at 3650  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.333 and 1.408  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is very easy since already complete after the high temperature thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient of only 600°C.

[0066] It is apparent from the various FTIR spectra that it is necessary to use extremely high temperature thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient in order to eliminate the residual optical absorption of typically deposited PECVD silica films. In particular, it is demonstrated that the elimination of the residual nitrogen and hydrogen of typically deposited PECVD silica films is very difficult since the residual Si:N-H oscillators (whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515  $\mu\text{m}$ ) requires a temperature of 1100°C because the nitrogen atoms of these oscillators are bonded to the silicon atoms of the  $\text{SiO}_2$  network via two covalent bonds, the elimination of the SiN-H oscillators (whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.479  $\mu\text{m}$ ) requires a temperature of 1000°C, and the elimination of the SiO-H oscillators (whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.408 and 1.441  $\mu\text{m}$ ) requires a temperature of 900°C.

[0067] It is very difficult to achieve high optical quality silica-based optical components from typically deposited PECVD silica films using thermal treatments in nitrogen ambient at temperatures lower than 1100°C.

[0068] Our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 describes an improved Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapour Deposition technique for silica films which involves the independent control of the  $\text{SiH}_4$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{N}_2$  gases as well as of the total deposition pressure via an automatic control of the pumping speed of the vacuum pump in a five-dimensional space. The first independent variable, the  $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow, is fixed at 0.20 std litre/min. The second independent variable, the  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow, is fixed at 6.00 std litre/min. The third independent variable, the  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow, being fixed at 3.15 std litre/min. The fourth independent variable, the total deposition pressure, being varied between of 2.00 Torr, 2.10 Torr, 2.20 Torr, 2.30 Torr, 2.40 Torr, 2.50 Torr, and 2.60 Torr. The fifth dimension is the observed FTIR characteristics of various buffers (claddings), as reported in Figure 3b, Figure 4b, Figure 6b, Figure 7b, Figure 8b and Figure 9b.

[0069] The five-dimensional space permits the elimination of these residual nitrogen and hydrogen atoms as to achieve high optical quality silica-based optical components from typically deposited PECVD silica films a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C.

[0070] Figure 3b, Figure 4b, Figure 6b, Figure 7b, Figure 8b and Figure 9b show the FTIR spectra of PECVD silica films deposited using a commercially available PECVD system, the "Concept One" system manufactured by Novellus Systems in California, USA, using the fixed flow rates of silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ), of nitrous oxide ( $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ) and of nitrogen ( $\text{N}_2$ ), as described in this co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711. These spectra are obtained before and after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C in a standard diffusion tube. It is clear that the technique described in our co-pending application allows the attainment of high optical quality silica films after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C and that the independent control of the downstream pressure of this improved PECVD deposition technique has a major effect on the FTIR spectra of the treated silica films:

[0071] Figure 3b shows a more intense and smaller FWHM Si-O-Si "rocking mode" absorption peak (centred at  $460\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and Si-O-Si "in-phase-stretching mode" absorption peak (centred at  $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from 2.00 Torr to 2.40 Torr followed by a slight degradation as the pressure is increased further more up to 2.60 Torr;

[0072] Figure 4b shows the gradual elimination of the Si-OH oscillators (centered at  $885\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from 2.00 Torr up to the optimum pressure of 2.40 Torr followed by a slight degradation as the pressure is increased further more up to 2.60 Torr. Figure 4b also shows the gradual elimination of the Si-ON oscillators (centred at  $950\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from 2.00 Torr to 2.40 Torr followed by a slight degradation as the pressure is increased further more up to 2.60 Torr. The optimum separation and deep valley observed at 2.40 Torr is an indication that the silica films resulting from this optimum deposition pressure are composed of high quality  $\text{SiO}_2$  material. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which still incorporate a lot of Si-ON oscillators even after much higher temperature thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient;

[0073] Figure 6b shows the gradual and total elimination of the N=N oscillators (centered at  $1555\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from 2.00 Torr to 2.60 Torr. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $1000^\circ\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results;

[0074] Figure 7b shows the gradual elimination of the Si=O oscillators (centered at  $1875\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and on the unknown oscillator (centered at  $2010\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from 2.00 Torr to 2.40 Torr followed by a slight degradation as the pressure is increased further more up to 2.60 Torr. These effects are not that important since only the fourth harmonics of the Si=O oscillators could absorb in the  $1.30$  to  $1.55\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  optical bands;

[0075] Figure 8b shows that the Si-H oscillators (centered at  $2260\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and which 3<sup>rd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.443$  and  $1.508\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) are completely eliminated for all deposition pressures;



- [0076] Figure 9b shows the spectacular gradual elimination of the Si:N-H oscillators (centered at  $3380\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.515\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from  $2.00\text{ Torr}$  to  $2.60\text{ Torr}$ . This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. Figure 9b also shows a spectacular gradual elimination of the SiN-H oscillators (centered at  $3420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.479\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) as the total deposition pressure is increased from  $2.00\text{ Torr}$  to  $2.60\text{ Torr}$ . This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. Figure 9b also shows that the SiO-H oscillators (centered at  $3510\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.408$  and  $1.441\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) are completely eliminated for all deposition pressures. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $900^{\circ}\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. Finally, Figure 9b also shows that the elimination of the HO-H oscillators (centered at  $3650\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.333$  and  $1.408\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) are completely eliminated for all deposition pressures.
- [0077] It is apparent from the various FTIR spectra that our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 prohibits the use of extremely high temperature thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient in order to eliminate the residual optical absorption of typically deposited PECVD silica films. In particular, it is demonstrated that the elimination of the residual nitrogen and hydrogen of typically deposited PECVD silica films is completely achieved after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of  $800^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The residual Si:N-H oscillators (whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.515\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) are completely eliminated as the total deposition pressure is increased from  $2.00\text{ Torr}$  to  $2.60\text{ Torr}$ . The residual SiN-H oscillators (whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.479\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) are also completely eliminated as the total deposition pressure is increased from  $2.00\text{ Torr}$  to  $2.60\text{ Torr}$ . The residual SiO-H oscillators (whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.408$  and  $1.441\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) are also

completely eliminated as the total deposition pressure is increased from 2.00 Torr to 2.60 Torr.

[0078] It is then very easy to achieve high optical quality silica films after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C using the  
5 technique described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711.

[0079] Our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 shows the spectacular effect of a fifth independent variable, the phosphine,  $\text{PH}_3$ , gas flow, on the optimization of the optical properties of the various buffer (cladding) and core waveguides in a six-dimensional space. The first independent variable, the  $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow, is fixed at 0.20 std  
10 litre/mi. The second independent variable, the  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow, is fixed at 6.00 std litre/min. The third independent variable, the  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow, is fixed at 3.15 std litre/min. The fourth independent variable, the  $\text{PH}_3$  gas flow, is varied between 0.00 std litre/min, 0.12 std litre/min; 0.25 std litre/min; 0.35 std litre/min; 0.50 std litre/min; and 0.65 std litre/min.

[0080] The fifth independent variable, the total deposition pressure, is fixed at 2.60 Torr

15 [0081] The sixth dimension is the observed FTIR characteristics of various buffer (cladding) and core waveguides, as reported in: Figure 3c, Figure 4c, Figure 5c, Figure 6c, Figure 7c, Figure 8c, & Figure 9c.

[0082] Figure 3c, Figure 4c, Figure 5c, Figure 6c, Figure 7c, Figure 8c and Figure 9c show the FTIR spectra of PECVD silica films deposited using a commercially available  
20 PECVD system, the "Concept One" system manufactured by Novellus Systems in California, USA, using the fixed optimum total deposition pressure and the fixed flow rates of silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ), of nitrous oxide ( $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ) and of nitrogen ( $\text{N}_2$ ), as described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491. These spectra are obtained after a high temperature thermal treatment for 180 minutes in a nitrogen ambient at a fixed  
25 temperature of only 800°C in a standard diffusion tube. It is clear that the technique described in our co-pending patent application allows the achievement of high optical quality silica waveguides after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C:

[0083] Figure 3c shows that the intense and small FWHM Si-O-Si "rocking mode"  
30 absorption peak (centred at  $460\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and Si-O-Si "in-phase-stretching mode" absorption

peak (centred at  $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 3b is maintained in Figure 3c as the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate is gradually increased from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min. This means that at a fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr, the control of the  $\text{PH}_3$  gas flow independently of the  $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow, of the  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow and of the  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow has no effect on the basic FTIR spectra of the treated silica films;

[0084] Figure 4c shows that an even more gradual elimination of the Si-OH oscillators (centered at  $885\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is observed at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr as the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate is increased from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min. Figure 4c also shows that a gradual elimination of the Si-ON oscillators (centred at  $950\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is also observed at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr as the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate is increased from 0.00 std litre/min up to the optimum 0.25 std litre/min followed by a very slight degradation as the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate is increased further more up to 0.65 std litre/min. This spectacular improved elimination of the residual Si-ON oscillators after a 180 minutes thermal treatment of only  $800^\circ\text{C}$  contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films of Figure 4a which still incorporate a lot of Si-ON oscillators even after a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of  $1100^\circ\text{C}$ . This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr as described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 4b which still incorporate a large number of Si-ON oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of  $800^\circ\text{C}$ . The optimum separation and deep valley between the Si-O-Si "in-phase-stretching mode" absorption peak ( $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and the Si-O-Si "bending mode" absorption peak ( $810\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 4b is maintained and in fact slightly improved as the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate is gradually increased from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.35 std litre/min.

[0085] Figure 5c shows that a gradual appearance of the P=O oscillators (centered at  $1330\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and which does not have a higher harmonics which could cause optical absorption in the  $1.30$  to  $1.55\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  optical bands) is observed at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr as the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate is increased from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min. This FTIR absorption peak is used to calibrate the phosphorus incorporation in core.

[0086] Figure 6c shows that of the N=N oscillators (centered at  $1555\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) are completely eliminated at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr for all  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate values from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films of Figure 6a which require a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $1000^\circ\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr by our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 6b which still incorporate a large number of N=N oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of  $800^\circ\text{C}$ .

[0087] Figure 7c shows that the Si=O oscillators (centered at  $1875\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and the unknown oscillator (centered at  $2010\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr are not influenced by the  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min. These effects are not that important since only the fourth harmonics of the Si=O oscillators could absorb in the 1.30 to 1.55  $\mu\text{m}$  optical bands;

[0088] Figure 8c shows that the Si-H oscillators (centered at  $2260\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and which third harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.443 and 1.508  $\mu\text{m}$ ) at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr are still completely eliminated by any of all  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rates from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min.

[0089] Figure 9c shows that the complete elimination of the Si:N-H oscillators (centered at  $3380\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515  $\mu\text{m}$ ) at the total deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr is maintained for all  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rates from 0.00 std litre/min to 0.65 std litre/min. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $1100^\circ\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr by our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 9b which still incorporate a lot of Si:N-H oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of  $800^\circ\text{C}$ .

[0090] Figure 9c also shows that the a spectacular complete elimination of the SiN-H oscillators (centered at  $3420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.479\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) at the total deposition pressure of  $2.60\text{ Torr}$  is also maintained for all  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rates from  $0.00$  std litre/min to  $0.65$  std litre/min. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $1000^\circ\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than  $2.40\text{ Torr}$  by our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 9b which still incorporate a lot of SiN-H oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of  $800^\circ\text{C}$ .

[0091] Figure 9c also shows that the complete elimination of the SiO-H oscillators (centered at  $3510\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.408$  and  $1.441\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) at the total deposition pressure of  $2.60\text{ Torr}$  is maintained for all  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rates from  $0.00$  std litre/min to  $0.65$  std litre/min. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of  $900^\circ\text{C}$  in order to achieve similar results. Finally, Figure 9c also shows that the complete elimination of the HO-H oscillators (centered at  $3650\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose  $2^{\text{nd}}$  harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.333$  and  $1.408\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) at the total deposition pressure of  $2.60\text{ Torr}$  is maintained for all  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rates from  $0.00$  std litre/min to  $0.65$  std litre/min.

[0092] It is clear from the various FTIR spectra that our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491 allows the use of various  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rates from  $0.00$  std litre/min to  $0.65$  std litre/min. to achieve the required 'delta-n' after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of  $800^\circ\text{C}$  while maintaining excellent optical quality.

[0093] However, with this 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of  $800^\circ\text{C}$  are associated some residual stress-induced mechanical problems of deep-etched optical elements (mechanical movement of the side-walls), some residual stress-induced mechanical problems at the buffer/core interface or at the

core/cladding interface (micro-structural defects, micro-voiding and separation) and some residual stress-induced optical problems (polarisation dependant power loss).

[0094] Figure 10 shows the stress hysteresis in a nitrogen ambient of buffer (cladding) and core during the heating of the silicon wafer from room temperature to 800°C, during its stabilization for 180 minutes at 800°C and during its natural cooling from 800°C to room temperature.

[0095] Figure 10 shows that the mechanical stress of buffer (cladding) is compressive at about -250MPa prior to the stress hysteresis cycle; is compressive throughout the complete stress hysteresis cycle; decreases almost linearly as the temperature increases linearly; an expected situation since the (almost constant) coefficient of linear expansion of silica-based buffer (cladding) is smaller than the one of the underlying silicon; and shows three plastic deformation regions during the stress hysteresis cycle, namely Region B1, from 450°C to 575°C, where it decreases much faster than what is expected from a linear decrease associated with its elastic deformation; Region B2, from 575°C to 650°C, where it is almost constant; and Region B3, during the 180 minutes stabilization at 800°C, where it decreases as the temperature remains unchanged. The mechanical stress of buffer (cladding) is also compressive at about -150MPa after the stress hysteresis cycle.

[0096] In addition Figure 10 shows that the mechanical stress of core is tensile at about 175MPa prior to the stress hysteresis cycle; is tensile throughout the complete stress hysteresis cycle; and increases almost linearly as the temperature increases linearly. This is an expected situation since the (almost constant) coefficient of linear expansion of silica-based core is smaller than the one of the underlying silicon.

[0097] Figure 10 also shows two plastic deformation regions during the stress hysteresis cycle, namely Region C1, from 450°C to 675°C, where the stress reverses its trends and in fact decreases as the temperature is increasing; and Region C2, from 675°C to 800°C, where it is almost constant. The stress is tensile at about 40MPa after the stress hysteresis cycle.

[0098] Figure 10 shows that the optical elements of the device are to be prepared from a (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) combination bi-layer after a thermal treatment for 180 minutes in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C. To

this particular combination are associated some residual stress-induced mechanical problems of deep-etched optical elements (mechanical movement of side-walls), some residual stress-induced mechanical problems at the buffer/core or core/cladding interfaces (micro-structural defects, micro-voiding and separation) and some residual stress-induced optical problems (polarisation dependant power loss).

**[0099]** Optical elements, such as gratings or waveguides, require deep-etched (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) with vertical side-walls and with a seamless buffer/core interface.

**[00100]** Figure 11 shows SEM pictures of a grating and a waveguide with deep-etched vertical side-walls and with a seamless buffer/core interface deep-etched through buffer and core.

**[00101]** Figure 12 shows a stress-relief mechanism involving the elastic strain of such a deep-etched (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) optical element. From this sequence of three graphical representations, it is clear that such a (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) deep-etched optical element will systematically result in a positively sloped elastic strain of the optical element's side-wall.

**[00102]** This stress-relieve mechanism shows that the lateral strain of the compressive stress buffer forces the deep-etched side-wall of buffer to move outward; and the lateral strain of the tensile stress core forces the deep-etched side-wall of core to move inward.

**[00103]** This combination of strains will systematically result in deep-etched (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) optical elements with a positive slope side-wall, i.e. a side-wall with an angle smaller than 90°.

**[00104]** To estimate the amplitude of this effect, consider the hypothetical of zero bonding at the buffer/(silicon wafer) interface, of zero bonding at the buffer/core interface, and of zero bonding at the buffer/core interface. The outward elastic strain of the side-wall of the compressive stress buffer,  $\epsilon_b$ , and the inward elastic strain of the side-wall of the tensile stress core,  $\epsilon_c$ , would simply be:

$$\epsilon_b = \sigma_b / E_b \quad ; \quad \epsilon_c = \sigma_c / E_c$$

[00105] where  $\sigma_b$  and  $E_b$  are respectively the mechanical stress and the modulus of elasticity of buffer and where  $\sigma_c$  and  $E_c$  are respectively the mechanical stress and the modulus of elasticity of core.

5 [00106] The modulus of elasticity of silica thin films measured by micro-indentation and measured by electrostatic membrane deflection are respectively reported as 70 GPa and 69 GPa in the following two references: Thin Solid Films, Vol. 283, p. 15, (1996); IEEE Transactions on Electron Devices, Vol. ED25, No.10, p.1249, (1978).

10 [00107] To the -150MPa compressive stress of buffer and 40MPa tensile stress of core reported in Figure 10 at room temperature would then be associated a strain of about -0.21% (-0.15GPa/70GPa) for buffer and of about 0.057% (0.040GPa/70GPa) for core. The negative sign indicates that the strain is outward.

15 [00108] This means that the buffer portion of a 5.0 $\mu$ m wide deep-etched waveguide not bonded to the underlying silicon wafer and not bonded to the core portion of the same deep-etched waveguide would laterally expand by about 0.011 $\mu$ m (0.21% of 5 $\mu$ m) and that the buffer portion of a 1150 $\mu$ m wide deep-etched grating not bonded to the underlying silicon wafer and not bonded to the core portion of the same deep-etched grating would laterally expand by about 2.46  $\mu$ m (0.21% of 1150 $\mu$ m). Similarly the core portion of the 5.0 $\mu$ m wide deep-etched waveguide not bonded to the underlying buffer portion of the same deep-etched waveguide would laterally expand by about 0.0029 $\mu$ m (0.057% of 5 $\mu$ m) and that the core portion of a 1150 $\mu$ m wide deep-etched grating not bonded to the underlying buffer portion of the same deep-etched grating would laterally expand by about 0.66 $\mu$ m (0.057% of 1150 $\mu$ m).

25 [00109] In reality, since the buffer is bonded to the underlying silicon wafer and to the upper core at the buffer/core interface, the effect of the outward strain of buffer and of the inward strain of core would be observed as a noticeably different sloped side-wall for a narrow waveguide and for a wide grating.

30 [00110] If we assume a 2.0  $\mu$ m deep-etched buffer and a 5.0  $\mu$ m deep-etch core than the single-sided strain of the upper core surface of the 5.0 $\mu$ m wide deep-etched waveguide and of the 1150 $\mu$ m wide deep-etched grating could be as high as 0.0070  $\mu$ m (50% of (0.011+0.0029 $\mu$ m)) and 1.56  $\mu$ m (50% of (2.46+0.66 $\mu$ m)) respectively with



respect to the bottom of the resulting 7.0  $\mu\text{m}$  deep-etch optical element. The expected 89.9° ( $90^\circ - \arctan(0.0070\mu\text{m}/7.0\mu\text{m})$ ) side-wall slope of the deep-etched waveguide would not be noticeable on a SEM picture but the expected 77.4° ( $90^\circ - \arctan(1.56\mu\text{m}/7.0\mu\text{m})$ ) side-wall slope of the deep-etched grating would certainly be easy to see on a SEM picture.

[00111] Figure 13 shows four SEM pictures. The first two SEM pictures show the relative position between an isolated 5.0 $\mu\text{m}$  wide deep-etched waveguide and its neighboring 1150 $\mu\text{m}$  wide deep-etched grating at two different magnifications. The third SEM picture confirms that side-wall of the 5.0 $\mu\text{m}$  wide deep-etched waveguide facing the neighboring grating has a slope of about 90°. The fourth SEM picture confirms that side-wall of the 1150 $\mu\text{m}$  wide deep-etched grating facing the neighboring deep-etched waveguide has a much smaller slope of about 84°, slightly larger than the expected 77.4° slope. The difference between the measured and expected values will be discussed below.

[00112] The mechanical stress of buffer and core must be minimized as to maintain the ideal verticality of the side-wall of the waveguides, of the grating and of the other integrated optical elements of the optical device and allow minimum power loss from undesirable reflection and refraction of the infrared optical beams at the side-wall of these optical elements.

[00113] Figure 14 shows a graphical representation of the variable intensity shear stress building at the (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) interface and at the (tensile stress core)/(compressive stress clad) interface during the stress hysteresis cycle of Figure 10 and during the various thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient.

[00114] If the bonding of the buffer/core interface or of the core/cladding interface is strong enough, the exposure of the various optical elements to the various thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient can result in a modification of the micro-structure near these interfaces.

[00115] Figure 14 also shows some SEM pictures demonstrating the induced modification of the microstructure of core near these buffer/core and core/cladding interfaces.

[00116] Figure 15 shows a graphical representation of the variable intensity shear stress building at the (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) interface and at the (tensile stress core)/(compressive stress clad) interface during the stress hysteresis cycle of Figure 10 and during the various thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient. In this case, the intensity of the shear stress is such that it results in the formation of micro-voids in core and near the interfaces as an interfacial stress relief mechanism. These micro-voids are delineated during wafer preparation for SEM using a very light acid dip etch before loading in the electronic microscope.

[00117] If the bonding of the buffer/core interface or of the core/clad interface is strong enough, the exposure of the various optical elements to the various thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient can result in such a modification of the micro-structure near these interfaces that micro-voids are forming in core and near these interfaces.

[00118] Figure 15 also shows some SEM pictures demonstrating that the induced modification of the microstructure of core near these buffer/core and core/cladding interfaces is cause the formation of micro-voids. It is clear on these SEM pictures that the micro-voids are generated and aligned horizontally in a plane about 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  away from the buffer/bore interface. This is not that surprising since the transition from the (compressive stress buffer) to the (tensile stress core) is not absolutely abrupt at the interface and since micro-voids cannot form in a material under compressive stress.

[00119] Figure 16 shows some SEM pictures which demonstrate the stress relief of the variable intensity shear stress building at the (compressive stress buffer)/(tensile stress core) interface and at the (tensile stress core)/(compressive stress cladding) interface during the stress hysteresis cycle of Figure 10, during the various thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient or simply during wafer cleavage for SEM pictures.

[00120] In this case, the bonding of the buffer/core interface (or core/cladding interface) is no longer strong enough and the core partially slips on the buffer at the buffer/core interface (or cladding partially delaminate from core at the core/cladding interface).

[00121] In one particular case, the interface separation is only observed between core and buffer, indicating that core contraction is the root cause of the delamination.

[00122] The second SEM picture of Figure 16 shows the contraction of the 1150 $\mu$ m wide grating. It is clear from this picture that a portion of core has slipped aside over buffer and over a distance of about 0.40 $\mu$ m at the periphery of the grating. This is in line with the upper calculated contraction of 0.66 $\mu$ m. The slip is again initiated from a point located at the tip of the seam of the cladding and slightly away from the buffer/core interface from which a crack did propagate horizontally in core and about 0.5 $\mu$ m away from the buffer/core interface. Since a crack cannot propagate in a material under compressive stress, this crack propagation did require core to be in tensile stress. Since the transition from the compressive stress buffer to the tensile stress core is not absolutely abrupt at the interface, it is normal to see the crack initiation slightly away from the buffer/core interface. The tensile stress-relief mechanism of core has partially releases its energy by propagating a 0.40 $\mu$ m long crack in the core and by allowing its side-wall to slip by 0.40 $\mu$ m. This lateral of core explains the difference between the observed 84° of Figure 13 and the expected 77° from the upper calculation of the expected side-wall slope.

[00123] Figure 17 and Figure 18 are re-plots from J.A. Stratton, 'Electromagnetic Theory', Chapter 9, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1941.

[00124] Figure 17 and Figure 18 show the associated optical effect of the incidence angle of infrared light at the air/core interface on the reflection and transmission of infrared optical power (case where the infrared light is incoming respectively from the air side and from the core side of the side-wall of core a waveguide, a grating or of an another optical element). It is clear from Figure 17 and Figure 18 that a stress-induced variation of the side-wall slope from 90° to 87°, 84° or to the expected 77° will have a catastrophic effect on the loss of transmitted power of infrared light respectively propagating in Air or in core into the air/core interface of the tip of a waveguide, into the Air/core interface of the grating or into the air/core interface of other optical elements. It is clear from Figure 17 and Figure 18 that this stress-induced loss of power will be different for the two propagating modes states of light (i.e. TE and TM) and thus that an undesirable polarization dependent power loss effect (i.e. birefringence effect) is expected.

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[00125] It will be observed therefore that the mechanical stresses of core, buffer and cladding play a key role in the side-wall slope of deep-etched optical elements. It is also clearly demonstrated that the thermal treatment for 180 minutes in a nitrogen ambient at a reduced temperature of 800°C is associated with some residual stress-induced mechanical problems of deep-etched optical elements (mechanical movement of side-walls), and some residual stress-induced mechanical problems at the buffer/core or core/cladding interfaces (micro-structural defects, micro-voiding and separation) and some residual stress-induced optical problems (polarisation dependant power loss). An optimisation of the thermal treatments which allows the optical properties to be maintained while modifying the mechanical stress of the core is very important in the manufacture of such integrated optical elements.

#### Example

[00126] The technique in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention allows the simultaneous optimization of the optical and of the mechanical properties of buffer (cladding) and core in a seven-dimensional space. This consists of a first independent variable, the SiH<sub>4</sub> flow, fixed at 0.20 std litre/min; a second independent variable, the N<sub>2</sub>O flow, fixed at 6.00 std litre/min; a third independent variable, the N<sub>2</sub> flow, fixed at 3.15 std litre/min; a fourth independent variable, the PH<sub>3</sub> flow, fixed at 0.50 std litre/min; a fifth independent variable, the total deposition pressure, fixed at 2.60 Torr; and a sixth independent variable, the post-deposition thermal treatment being varied as follows:

- 30 minutes duration thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 600°C;
- 30 minutes duration thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 700°C;
- 30 minutes duration thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 750°C;
- 30 minutes duration thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 800°C;
- 30 minutes duration thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 850°C;
- 30 minutes duration thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at 900°C.

[00127] A seventh dimension is the observed FTIR characteristics of various buffer (cladding) and core silica-based optical elements, as reported in: Figure 3d, Figure 4d, Figure 5d, Figure 6d, Figure 7d, Figure 8d, & Figure 9d:

[00128] Figure 3d, Figure 4d, Figure 5d, Figure 6d, Figure 7d, Figure 8d and  
5 Figure 9d show the FTIR spectra of PECVD silica films deposited using a commercially available PECVD system, the "Concept One" system manufactured by Novellus Systems in California, USA, using the fixed optimum total deposition pressure and the fixed flow rates of silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ), of nitrous oxide ( $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ), of nitrogen ( $\text{N}_2$ ), and of phosphine ( $\text{PH}_3$ ) as described in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/799,491. These spectra  
10 are obtained after 30 minutes thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient at various temperatures in a standard diffusion tube. It is clear that this new patent application describes a way to independently optimize the thermal treatment and the optical properties of buffer, core and cladding as to allow the thermal treatment optimization of the mechanical properties of the silica-based optical elements without any interaction  
15 with the optical properties stable of these optical elements:

[00129] Figure 3d shows that the intense and small FWHM Si-O-Si "rocking mode" absorption peak (centred at  $460\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and Si-O-Si "in-phase-stretching mode" absorption peak (centred at  $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 3b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 3c is  
20 maintained as the temperature of the 30 minutes thermal treatments in a nitrogen ambient is gradually decreased from  $900^\circ\text{C}$  to  $600^\circ\text{C}$ . This means that independently of the  $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow of the  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow of the  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow and of the  $\text{PH}_3$  gas flow and as long as the deposition pressure is fixed to 2.60 Torr, the basic FTIR spectra of silica-based optical components are not affected by the temperature variation (between  $600^\circ\text{C}$  and  $900^\circ\text{C}$ ) of  
25 the 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient;

[00130] Figure 4d shows that the elimination of the Si-OH oscillators (centered at  $885\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 4b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 4c is maintained. Figure 4d also shows that the elimination of the Si-ON oscillators (centred at  $950\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition  
30 pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 4b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 4c is also maintained. This very spectacular improved elimination of the

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residual Si-ON oscillators after a 30 minutes thermal treatment of only 600°C contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films of Figure 4a which still incorporate a lot of Si-ON oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of 1100°C. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr by our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 4b which still incorporate a large number of Si-ON oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of 800°C. The optimum separation and deep valley between the Si-O-Si "in-phase-stretching mode" absorption peak ( $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and the Si-O-Si "bending mode" absorption peak ( $810\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 4b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 4c is also maintained. This means that this new technique allows the elimination of the Si-OH oscillators and of the the Si-ON oscillators independently of the thermal treatment of buffer, core and cladding as to allow the thermal treatment optimization of the mechanical properties of the silica-based optical elements without any interaction with the Si-OH oscillators and of the the Si-ON oscillators of these optical elements.

**[00131]** Figure 5d shows the gradual appearance of the P=O oscillators (centered at  $1330\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and which does not have a higher harmonics which could cause optical absorption in the 1.30 to 1.55  $\mu\text{m}$  optical bands) as the temperature of the 30 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient is increased from 600°C to 900°C.

**[00132]** Figure 6d shows that the elimination of the N=N oscillators (centered at  $1555\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 6b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 6c is maintained. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films of Figure 6a which require a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of 1000°C in order to achieve similar results. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 6b which still incorporate a large number of N=N oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of 800°C. This means that this new technique

allows the elimination of the N=N oscillators independently of the thermal treatment of buffer, core and cladding as to allow the thermal treatment optimization of the mechanical properties of the silica-based optical elements without any interaction with the N=N oscillators of these optical elements.

5    **[00133]**        Figure 7d shows that the Si=O oscillators (centered at  $1875\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and the unknown oscillator (centered at  $2010\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 7b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 7c are unchanged. These effects are not that important since only the fourth harmonics of the Si=O oscillators could absorb in the 1.30 to 1.55  $\mu\text{m}$  optical bands;

10   **[00134]**        Figure 8d shows that the elimination of the Si-H oscillators (centered at  $2260\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and which third harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.443 and 1.508  $\mu\text{m}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 8b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 8c is maintained. This means that this new technique allows the elimination of the Si-H oscillators independently of the thermal  
15   treatment of buffer, core and cladding as to allow the thermal treatment optimization of the mechanical properties of the silica-based optical elements without any interaction with the Si-H oscillators of these optical elements.

20   **[00135]**        Figure 9d shows that the spectacular complete elimination of the Si:N-H oscillators (centered at  $3380\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.515  $\mu\text{m}$ ) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 9b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 9c is maintained. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films of Figure 9a which require a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of 1100°C in order to achieve similar results. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned  
25   results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 9b which still incorporate a lot of Si:N-H oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of 800°C. Figure 9d shows that the a spectacular complete elimination of the SiN-H oscillators (centered at  $3420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.445 and 1.479  $\mu\text{m}$ ) of  
30   the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 9b and of the fixed  $\text{PH}_3$  flow rate of

0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 9c is also maintained. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films of Figure 9a which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of 1000°C in order to achieve similar results. This also contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of PECVD buffer (cladding) deposited at a non-optimized pressure of less than 2.40 Torr in our co-pending US patent application serial no. 09/833,711 of Figure 9b which still incorporate a large number of Si:N-H oscillators even after a 180 minutes thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a much higher temperature of 800°C. Figure 9d also shows that the complete elimination of the SiO-H oscillators (centered at 3510 cm<sup>-1</sup> whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.408 and 1.441 μm) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 9b and of the fixed PH<sub>3</sub> flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 9c is maintained. This contrasts with the upper-mentioned results of typical PECVD silica films which require a thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient at a temperature of 900°C in order to achieve similar results. Finally, Figure 9d also shows that the complete elimination of the HO-H oscillators (centered at 3650 cm<sup>-1</sup> whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between 1.333 and 1.408 μm) of the fixed deposition pressure of 2.60 Torr of Figure 9b and of the fixed PH<sub>3</sub> flow rate of 0.50 std litre/min of the Figure 9c is maintained. This means that this new technique allows the elimination of the Si:N-H oscillators, of the SiN-H oscillators, of the SiO-H oscillators and of the HO-H oscillators independently of the thermal treatment of buffer, core and cladding as to allow the thermal treatment optimization of the mechanical properties of the silica-based optical elements without any interaction with the Si:N-H oscillators, with the SiN-H oscillators, with the SiO-H oscillators or with the HO-H oscillators of these optical elements.

It is clear from these various FTIR spectra that this new technique allows the elimination of the various thermally-induced and stress-related residual mechanical problems by the optimisation of the thermal treatment (i.e. the use of the Regions B1, B2, B3, C1 and C2 of the stress hysteresis of Figure 10) without affecting the optical absorption properties of optical elements in the 1.55 μm wavelength (and/or 1.30 wavelength) optical region.

[00136] It is then clear from these various FTIR spectra, from the stress hysteresis of buffer, core and cladding and from the various presented SEM pictures that this new technique is key to achieving the required 'delta-n' while eliminating the undesirable



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residual Si:N-H oscillators (observed as a FTIR peak centered at  $3380\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.515\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ), SiN-H oscillators (centered at  $3420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.445$  and  $1.479\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) and SiO-H oscillators (centered at  $3510\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and whose 2<sup>nd</sup> harmonics could cause an optical absorption between  $1.408$  and  $1.441\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ) after an optimised thermal treatment in a nitrogen ambient which can provide improved silica-based optical elements with reduced optical absorption in the  $1.55\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  wavelength (and/or  $1.30$  wavelength) optical region without the residual stress-induced mechanical problems of deep-etched optical elements (mechanical movement of side-walls), without the residual stress-induced mechanical problems at the buffer/core or core/cladding interfaces (micro-structural defects, micro-voiding and separation) and without the residual stress-induced optical problems (polarisation dependant power loss).

[00137] It will be apparent to one skilled in the art that many variations of the invention are possible. The PECVD silica films could be deposited at a temperature different than  $400^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It could be deposited at any temperature between  $100$  and  $650^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

[00138] The PECVD equipment could be different than the Novellus Concept One. The requirement is to provide independent control of the four basic control parameters:  $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow rate,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow rate,  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow rate and total deposition pressure.

[00139] The buffer (cladding) local optimum ( $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow of  $0.20$  std litre/min,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow of  $6.00$  std litre/min,  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow of  $3.15$  std litre/min and a total deposition pressure of  $2.60$  Torr) is this four-independent-variables space could have a different set of coordinates ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$ , deposition pressure) using the same Novellus Concept One equipment.

[00140] The buffer (cladding) local optimum could have a different set of coordinates ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$ , deposition pressure) in another PECVD equipment.

[00141] The core local optimum ( $\text{SiH}_4$  gas flow of  $0.20$  std litre/min,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  gas flow of  $6.00$  std litre/min,  $\text{N}_2$  gas flow of  $3.15$  std litre/min,  $\text{PH}_3$  gas flow of  $0.57$  std litre/min, and a total deposition pressure of  $2.60$  Torr) is this five-independent-variables space could have a different set of coordinates ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$ ,  $\text{PH}_3$ , deposition pressure) using the same Novellus Concept One equipment.

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[00142] The core local optimum could have a different set of coordinates ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$ ,  $\text{PH}_3$ , deposition pressure) in another PECVD equipment. The 'delta-n' could be different than 0.015 and range between 0.005 and 0.020.

[00143] The  $\text{SiH}_4$  silicon raw material gas could be replaced by an alternate silicon  
5 containing gas, such as: silicon tetra-chloride,  $\text{SiCl}_4$ , silicon tetra-fluoride,  $\text{SiF}_4$ , disilane,  $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ , dichloro-silane,  $\text{SiH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , chloro-fluoro-silane  $\text{SiCl}_2\text{F}_2$ , difluoro-silane,  $\text{SiH}_2\text{F}_2$  or any other silicon containing gases involving the use of hydrogen, H, chlorine, Cl, fluorine, F, bromine, Br, and iodine, I.

[00144] The  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  oxidation gas could be replaced by an alternate oxygen  
10 containing gas, such as: oxygen,  $\text{O}_2$ , nitric oxide,  $\text{NO}_2$ , water,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , hydrogen peroxide,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ , carbon monoxide, CO or carbon dioxide,  $\text{CO}_2$ .

[00145] The  $\text{N}_2$  carrier gas could be replaced by an alternate carrier gas, such as: helium, He, neon, Ne, argon, Ar or krypton, Kr.

[00146] The  $\text{PH}_3$  doping gas could be replaced by an alternate gas, such as:  
15 diborane,  $\text{B}_2\text{H}_6$ , Arsine ( $\text{AsH}_3$ ), Titanium hydride,  $\text{TiH}_4$  or germane,  $\text{GeH}_4$ , Silicon Tetrafluoride,  $\text{SiF}_4$  or carbon tetrafluoride,  $\text{CF}_4$ .

[00147] The high temperature thermal treatment in nitrogen can be performed at a temperature different than  $800^\circ\text{C}$ . The preferred range is from 400 to  $1200^\circ\text{C}$ .

[00148] The high temperature thermal treatment can be performed in a different  
20 ambient than nitrogen. Other ambient gases or mixtures of gases may include oxygen,  $\text{O}_2$ , hydrogen,  $\text{H}_2$ , water vapour,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , argon, Ar, fluorine,  $\text{F}_2$ , carbon tetrafluoride,  $\text{CF}_4$ , nitrogen trifluoride,  $\text{NF}_3$ , hydrogen peroxide,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ .

[00149] The optical region of interest is not limited to the 1.30 to 1.55  $\mu\text{m}$  optical  
25 region since the higher oscillation harmonics of the eliminated oscillators have other optical benefits at longer or shorter wavelengths. The wavelengths of the first, second, third and fourth harmonics of these oscillators are to be covered by this patent.

[00150] The invention has application in may devices other than Mux or Dmux  
30 devices. The following is a list of suitable devices, which is not intended to be exhaustive: Add-After-Drop Filters (AADF) devices; Arrayed Wave Guide (AWG) and Arrayed Wave Guide Grating (AWGG) devices; thermal Arrayed Wave Guide (AAWGG)

devices; Charged Coupled Devices (CCD) devices; Distributed Feedback Laser Diode (DFB-LD) devices; Erbium Doped Fiber Amplifier (EDFA) devices; Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) application devices; Four Wave Mixing (FWM) devices; Fresnel Mirror (FM) devices; Laser Diode (LD) devices; Light Emitting Diodes (LED) devices; Mach-Zenhder (MZ), Mach-Zenhder Interferometer (MZI), Mach-Zenhder Interferometer Multiplexer (MZIM) devices; Micro-Opto-Electro-Mechanical Systems (MOEMS) devices; Monitor Photo Diode (MPD) devices; Multi-Wavelength Optical Sources (MWOS) devices; Optical Add/Drop Multiplexers (OADM) devices; Optical Amplifier (AF) devices; Optical Cross-Connect (OCC, OXC) devices; Optical Cross Point (OCP) devices; Optical Filter (OF) devices; Optical Interferometer (OI) devices; Optical Network Unit (ONU) devices; Optical Saw Wave (OSW) devices; Optical Splitter (OS) devices; Optical Switch (OSW) and Optical Switch Module (OSM) devices; Photonic ATM (PATM) switching devices; Planar Lightwave Circuits (PLC) devices; Positive Emitter Coupled Logic (PECL) devices; Quarter Wave (QW) devices; Receiver Photo Diode (RPD) devices; Semiconductor Optical Amplifier (SOA) devices; Spot-Size converter integrated Laser Diode (SS-LD) devices; Sub-Carrier Multiplexing Optical Network Unit (SCM-ONU) devices; Temperature Insensitive Arrayed Wave Guide (TI-AWG) devices; Thermo-Optic (TO) devices and Thermo-Optic Switch (TOS) devices; Time Compression Multiplexing - Time Division Multiple Access (TCM-TDMA) devices; Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) devices; Tunable Receiver (TR) devices; Uniform-Loss Cyclic-Frequency Arrayed Wave Guide (ULCF-AWG) devices; Vertical Cavity Surface Emitting Laser (VCSEL) devices; Wavelength Dispersive Multiplexing (WDM), Wavelength Dispersive Multiplexing Transceivers (WDMT) devices; Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems (MEMS) device: Information Technologies MEMS devices; Medical/Biochemical MEMS devices; Biochip devices; Lab-On-A-Chip (LOAC) devices; Micro-Total Analysis System ( $\mu$ -TAS) devices; Automotive MEMS devices; Industrial/Automation MEMS devices; Environmental Monitoring MEMS devices; Telecommunications MEMS devices.

**[00151]** Although the invention has been described and illustrated in detail, it is clearly understood that the same is by way of illustration and example and is not to be taken by way of limitation, the spirit and scope of the invention being limited only by the terms of the appended claims.